

Celebrities at Play.

Absence of occupation is not rest ;
A mind quite vacant is a mind distressed."



DO see the great unbend is, we have it on historic authority, a source of infinite amusement to the populace. If that was true in Macaulay's days, it is even less disputable in these, when a special journalism exists mainly to chronicle the small doings of the great, and every newspaper has its personal column. The fierce light of publicity, which at one time beat solely on the throne and its entourage, now shines as brilliantly in Stuccoville as on the mansion or the palace. The goings and comings of the Brown-Joneses and the Fitz-Smythes are made as prominent—at a guinea or a half the paragraph—as those of Dukes and Cabinet Ministers. Everybody knows, or wants to know, everybody else's little weaknesses ; and he is a careful man nowadays who hides his idiosyncrasies from the public gaze. Happier still is he who, having his skeleton in his cupboard, can double lock the door and lose the key.

Before the days of society journalism these things were never freely talked of—except with bated breath and in the most profound secrecy at tea and scandal gatherings—during the lifetime of the personage. In his biography they would find a place, when he had no power to resent the im-

pertinent prying into his domestic secrets. Who, for instance, would have dared to print a gossipy par. about Cardinal Richelieu's favourite recreation of leaping over furniture ; Peter the Great's diversion of being wheeled in a perambulator over his neighbours' flower-beds ; or Pope Innocent III.'s partiality for ninepins ? Yet everyone knows and freely criticises the amusements of our Royal Family, our greatest legislators, and most celebrated people. The musical performances of our princes and princesses, and the Princess of Wales's achievements in amateur photography—in which she is an equal adept with the Grand Duke of Tuscany and the Archduchess Maria Theresa—are matters of common knowledge. The caricaturist indulges his fancy, and often his political spite, about Mr. Gladstone's tree-felling, Lord Salisbury's experimental chemistry, Mr. Balfour's golf, Mr. W. H. Smith's yachting, Mr. Chaplin's coachdriving, and Mr. Chamberlain's amateur gardening. When Lord Sherbrooke was known as "Bobby Lowe," his achievements on the bicycle were not only the object of caricature, but the subject of much coarser vilification than ever was the childish amusement of the poet Shelley with his paper boats in the parks. Even Sir W. Vernon Harcourt was openly twitted in the House of Commons the other day by Sir Henry James on his incapacity in shooting.

But the popular knowledge on these matters is not solely due to partisan animosity. The demand for such information is insatiable, and the competition in the journalistic world so keen that the demand is supplied with as much detail as possible. Hence Mr. Irving's dog is as familiar in the public mind as either Scott's canine companion or Dante's cat, and people talk glibly of Rosa Bonheur's pets, Sarah Bernhardt's, snakes and tigers, and the monkeys with whose gambols Mrs. Weldon beguiled her leisure hours. Nor is the Prince of Wales's fondness for horses and horse-racing free either from criticism or condemnation.

All this publicity is not perhaps an un-mixed evil. Our celebrities at play nowa-

days, if they do not take their pleasures more sadly, do so at least with more discretion. The Prince of Wales, for instance, is criticised, condemned, and even prayed for, because he has a modest racing stable, encourages the sport of kings, and loses a modest stake at cards. But what sort of a paragraph would appear in *The Weekly Scandalmonger* if he followed in the footsteps of that previous Prince of Wales whose tavern-frequenting is matter of history. Our celebrities do not now play pranks publicly. If Lord Tennyson, instead of meditative wanderings by the sea, were to indulge, as Cowper did, in glazing windows, a snapshot of a detective camera might be relied on quickly to give publicity to the fact. If Professor Tyndall, instead of climbing the Alps, were to copy Rousseau, and roll boulders down Primrose-hill, he, too, would quickly achieve an unenviable notoriety. Or if any of our present-day celebrities were to seek their relaxation and amusement in the form which delighted Dean Swift, by harnessing his servants and driving them up and down stairs, what "snappy" paragraphs there would be in the society journals.

The amusements of our celebrities are tame and commonplace in comparison with some of these. But even nowadays the idiosyncrasies of public men are sometimes curious. For instance, there lives in the neighbourhood of Nottingham the Rev. Dr. Cox, the late editor of *The Expositor*, the most famous Hebrew scholar in the country. He and his wife are to be constantly seen playing at ball in the front garden of his residence. If it was done in the sanctity of the back garden, there would be no ground for comment, for the fact of a learned divine playing at ball is not more remarkable than that recorded by Disraeli the elder, of Knox visiting Calvin one Sunday and finding



COWPER GLAZING WINDOWS.

him engaged in a game of bowls. No one has presumed to whisper that our greatest Hebrew scholar was ever guilty of amusing himself in his own peculiar way on a Sunday, and certainly no one has ever complained of annoyance. This cannot be said with regard to the amusements of some "celebrities," especially when they take the form of pets. Sarah Bernhardt came under the notice of the authorities

in America on one occasion, when her pet tiger got loose and created a large amount of consternation. Everyone must remember the notoriety a certain Countess achieved a few years ago with respect to her cats. That was perhaps the worst instance that could be cited. But there was a doleful story told some time ago by the "interviewer" employed by a



"SARAH'S TIGER."

smart paper to interview Mrs. Weldon when she was on her theatrical tour. He found her amusing herself with her pet monkeys, and was exceedingly discomfited by her giving him her specially pet monkey to mind while she went upstairs. No one, perhaps, wastes much sympathy over interviewers, and no great regret would be felt in the fact that "the subsequent proceedings interested him no more."

One thing, however, should not be lost sight of. The continual harping upon one point by caricaturists as well as chroniclers is apt to mislead. Mr. Balfour, for instance, is often supposed to be devoted to nothing but politics and golf, whereas he is best known as the greatest metaphysician of the age. The Edinburgh University conferred on him their degree in recognition of his mental philosophy. Mr. Gladstone's tree-felling, too, has assumed an exaggerated importance in the eyes of the masses, from a similar cause. As a matter of fact, and especially of late years, his wood-chopping feats have been few and far between. He himself only recently claimed, as his chief recreation during the past forty years, the study of Homer, for which he is, perhaps, more famed than any of his other achievements. With him recreation has been change of employment, just as Louis XVI. turned from cares of State to making locks, the



"GOLF."

Buonapartes to literary pursuits, and Prince Rupert, the discoverer of mezzotint, to practical engraving. Lord Sherbrooke, too, though an ardent cyclist, found recreation also in poetry, as testified by his "Poems of a Life," while Smiles' self-help series is one of the best instances of useful recreative study. It is even doubtful, on his own authority, if Mr. Chamberlain's leisure is wholly absorbed in the immense gardens of his palatial residence on the outskirts of Birmingham, for

he himself is recorded to have said at a meeting he addressed in that town, that he would far rather have been at home romping with his children than addressing his constituency. This is the only available authority at the moment for the statement that he shares the weakness of Oliver Goldsmith and the historian Macaulay for juvenile romping—a weakness with which his political opponents have not been backward in twitting him. Lord Salisbury's chemical experiments at Hatfield have already been spoken of.

Mention has also already been made of the idiosyncrasies of celebrities as manifested in their play-time. It has also been pointed out that in the case of many recreation is only another source of useful employment. If any further illustration were needed on this point, attention might be called to the benefit



"A GRAND OLD FELLER."



"ROMPING."

astronomers have reaped through the dead James Nasmyth, and the living Sir Henry Bessemer, having used their leisure hours in the construction of telescopes. Nasmyth invented one which was far in advance of anything previously produced, and Sir Henry Bessemer is perfecting one which is to eclipse everything yet invented. But there is also another phase to be noticed in "Celebrities at Play," and that is the case of those who adopt some recreative employment or study which, while entirely distinct from their ordinary avocation, nevertheless becomes of utility. For this reason, apparently, Mr. Blackmore, the novelist, and author of "Lorna Doone,"

who is not only a novelist, but a barrister, has adopted market-gardening and fruit-growing as the occupation of his leisure hours. He is to be met with several times a week with his wagon-load of market produce *en route* for Covent Garden, where, as an enthusiastic amateur, he is scarcely distinguishable from the crowd of country professionals. His gardens and farm are at Teddington, and he is a well-known character there. Something akin to this picture of a favourite author amusing himself with growing cabbages and apples is that of our Poet Laureate in the milk trade. In his "Northern Farmer" and other of his poems, he displays a very acute knowledge of agricultural matters, but not many would have suspected him of being a dairy farmer in real earnest. This, however, is a fact, and on the west side of the Isle of Wight, where he passes most of his time, milk-carts are to be constantly met bearing the name and title, "Alfred, Lord Tennyson." Some of our ladies, too, show a practical turn of mind. Not only do they go in for gardening, but they are starting an association in London, with a depôt in Lower Sloane-street. Employment will be found for needy ladies in taking charge of conservatories, window boxes, balconies, and small gardens. Here we have an illustration of the recreation of the rich providing charitable assistance for the needy.

Harking back for a moment to "play" as confined to games, one remembers that



"AT HATFIELD."

Dr. Forbes Winslow has a real enthusiasm for lawn-tennis, Major Marindin is devoted to football, and that the amateur tennis championship is held by a knight—Sir E. Gray; while Lord Harris's fame as a cricketer is world-wide. It may, however, not be so well known that Lady Harris also shares her husband's love of the national game—even to the extent of playing it in the tropics. Only a few weeks ago at the hill station of Mahabuleswar—the seat of the Bom-

bay Government in the hot season—she captained a team of six ladies and six gentlemen against a similar team captained by another lady. The conditions were that the gentlemen should play left-handed with a broomstick, bowling and fielding also with the left hand, while the ladies should play in the orthodox manner. In the end Lady Harris's team won, scoring 63 runs to their opponents' 58. Fishing has had many enthusiastic devotees. John Bright, the poet Dryden, and the philosopher George Herbert, were all enthusiastic fishermen. In our own day Lord Hartington is a devoted knight of the rod; while Mr. Black, the novelist, it was recently reported, has been salmon fishing with great success in Sutherlandshire.

Of the celebrities who have outlived their "play" days, a unique example is to be found in the case of Prince Bismarck. In his early days Prince Bismarck had a passion for duelling. It does not appear whether it carried him to such an extent that—like Crockey Doyle who insulted people right

and left in order to have the pleasure of apologising—he made enemies for the pleasure of fighting them, but at least twenty-seven duels are recorded in which

he took part. Things then got too warm for him, or opponents grew shy; and, duels running short, he took to shooting, drinking, and playing jokes to such an extent that he became known as "mad Bismarck." What he does now, beyond smoking cigars on the "chain" system, and drinking immense quantities of beer, is not known, though there is some reason to think that, like his illustrious coadjutor Von Moltke, he spends his leisure in devising

schemes to harass his opponents. This method of spending their play hours is a common one among men of political eminence. There are few who can, like Mr. Gladstone, work off the petty worries of public life by cutting down trees and poring over musty manuscripts. There is no doubt at all that this accounts for the evergreen freshness of the man, his wonderful energy and vitality. It is not the work but the worry that kills.



"A KNIGHT OF THE ROD."

